

Message Text

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17

ACTION PM-03

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-09 ISO-00 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 L-02

CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 MC-02

AID-05 IGA-01 EB-07 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /080 W

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R 260626Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2590

INFO SECDEF WASHDC//ISA(SA)/DSAA//

AMEMBASSY LONDON

USCINCEUR//ECJ4/7-SAME//

DA WASHDC//DALO-ILS//

CMC WASHDC//PL/L//

CNO WASHDC//OP63//

C O N F I D E N T I A L KUWAIT 1329

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, KU

SUBJ: TANKS AND KUWAIT

1. AS HAS BEEN REPORTED PREVIOUSLY, KUWAITI-UK NEGOTIATIONS FOR PROCUREMENT OF APPROXIMATELY 120 CHIEFTAIN TANKS ARE DEAD-LOCKED. AS WEEKS GO BY, BOTH OUR BRITISH AND RELIABLE KUWAITI SOURCES INDICATE IMPASSE IS PROBABLY INSURMOUNTABLE. WE KNOW GOK IS LOOKING INTO POSSIBILITY OF OBTAINING THE FRG LEOPARD, BUILT UNDER LICENSE BY AN ITALIAN FIRM. GOK ALSO IS MAKING DIS-CREET INQUIRIES WITH CHRYSLER RE US EQUIPMENT. IN ADDITION, RECURRING RUMORS EXIST OF POSSIBLE INTEREST IN USSR-SUPPLIED TANKS AND OTHER EQUIPMENT.

2. I BELIEVE IT IS IN OUR INTEREST FOR BRITISH TO MAINTAIN THEIR 115 SECONDED NCO'S AND OFFICERS AND 20 HMG CIVILIAN MILITARY ADVISORS IN KUWAIT. SHOULD THEY LEAVE, THE VACCUUM MUST BE FILLED. THE LOCAL HEAD OF THE BRITISH LIAISON TEAM BELIEVES HIS GROUP'S CONTINUED PRESENCE AT CURRENT LEVELS IS DEPENDENT ON THE UK CONTINUING AS PRIMARY SOURCE OF ARMORED
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EQUIPMENT. IF KUWAIT TURNS ELSEWHERE FOR THIS EQUIPMENT, HE BELIEVES THE UK CAN BE EXPECTED OVER TIME TO PHASEDOWN ITS

PRESENCE.

3. WHILE OUR INTERESTS UNDOUBTEDLY ARE BEST SERVED BY FOSTERING THE CONTINUES PRESENCE IN KUWAIT OF UK MILITARY, I BELIEVE IT PRUDENT TO BE PREPARED TO STEP IN QUICKLY WITH AN ATTRACTIVE OFFER IF GOK AND HMG CANNOT REACH AN AGREEMENT. GOK ACCEPTANCE OF SUCH OFFER WOULD NOT NECESSARILY RESULT IN REDUCED UK PRESENCE, AND CERTAINLY WOULD IN ANY CASE BE PREFERABLE TO ALLOWING NON-US OR UK PARTY TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF SITUATION.

4. I HAVE BEEN INFORMED US ARMED FORCES HAVE RECENTLY REMOVED SOME M103-120MM GUN TANKS FROM SERVICE AND THAT THEY ARE NOW EXCESS TO US REQUIREMENTS. ALSO, I UNDERSTAND THERE IS A PROGRAM TO REBUILD EARLY MODEL M48 TANKS TO AN M48A5 CONFIGURATION.

5. FROM INFORMATION LOCALLY AVAILABLE, THE RANGE OF POSSIBILITIES APPEARS TO BE:

A. 120-.60 TANKS WITH FIVE YEARS SPARE PARTS, AMMUNITION, TRAINING, ETC. DELIVERY SCHEDULE OF FOUR YEARS OR LONGER WOULD PROBABLY PRECLUDE SUCH OFFER FROM SERIOUS CONSIDERATION.

B. 120-M48A5 TANKS WITH SPARES, ETC. DELIVERY SCHEUDULE WHICH COULD PROVIDE ABOUT 25 IN LESS THAN ONE YEAR COULD MAKE SUCH OFFER HIGHLY ATTRACTIVE.

C. 120-M103 TANKS WITH SPARES, ETC. A PACKAGE WHICH WOULD PROVIDE 25-50 IN A FEW MONTHS IN SERVICEABLE CONDITION FOR TRAINING, ETC, WHILE 100 WERE REBUILT/REMANUFACTURED/UPGRADED COULD ALSO BE QUITE ATTRACTIVE TO GOK. I UNDERSTAND MAJOR COMPLAINT US FORCES HAVE HAD AGAINST THIS TANK IS THAT SIZE AND WEIGHT TOO GREAT FOR BRIDGES IN EUROPE AND ASIA. THERE ARE NO BRIDGES IN KUWAIT.

6. REQUEST DEPARTMENT'S COMMENTS ON FOREGOING. IF DEPARTMENT FAVORABLE TO US OFFER TANKS TO GOK AFTER RPT AFTER CLEAR BREAKDOWN OF UK-GOK CHIEFTAIN TALKS, REQUEST INFORMATION ON ALTERNATE OFFERS WE COULD MAKE TO GOK. WE WOULD LIKE TO
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HAVE THIS INFORMATION (WHICH CAN BE PRELIMINARY AND GENERAL IN NATURE TO START WITH) SOONEST---ON UNDERSTANDING WE WILL NOT RPT NOT DISCUSS US TANK OFFER WITH KUWAITIS UNTIL AND UNLESS BRITISH ABANDON EFFORT SELL THEIR CHIEFTAIN TANKS.
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